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Message Text

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12
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W
---------- 013602
O R 150940Z APR 75
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2327
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 1529

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, US, CB, VS, SN
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE POLICY TOWARD REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM

REFS: (A) STATE 084084; (B) STATE 084161; (C) STATE 084185 (D) STATE 084221; (E) SINGAPORE 1474

1. ALTHOUGH GOS IS VERY RELUCTANT TO RETURN TO VIETNAM 56 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO ARRIVED ON THE VNAF C-130 (REF E), THE GOVERNMENT IS GENERALLY TAKING A VERY HARD-NOSED ATTITUDE TOWARD ADMITTING CAMBODIAN AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE NATIONALS ARRIVING FROM BANGKOK, SAIGON OR OTHER CITIES IN THE AREA. CURRENT SITUATION IS AS FOLLOWS:

(A) CAMBODIANS. ACCORDING KHMER AMBASSADOR WONGSANITH, GOS
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ISSUED NEW REGULATION APRIL 12 WHICH REFUSES TO PERMIT ANY

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CAMBODIAN NATIONALS TO ENTER SINGAPORE. AMBASSADOR WONGSANITH WAS UNCERTAIN WHETHER GOS WOULD MAKE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THIS GENERAL PROHIBITION. ACCORDING TO A REUTERS REPORT, DATELINE BANGKOK APRIL 12, A CAMBODIAN COUPLE OF CHINESE ORIGIN HOLDING VALID VISAS FOR SINGAPORE AND INTENDING TO VISIT THEIR THREE CHILDREN STUDYING IN SINGAPORE WERE REQUIRED BY SINGAPORE IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES TO RETURN TO BANGKOK. WONGSANITH ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 100 TO 150 CAMBODIAN NATIONALS LIVING IN SINGAPORE -- MOSTLY STUDENTS, BUSINESSMEN, WIVES OF SINGAPOREAN CITIZENS AND OTHER NATIONALS, ETC. HE INDICATED THAT GOS HAD NOT YET TAKEN ANY GENERAL ACTION TO LIMIT THEIR STAY IN SINGAPORE. HOWEVER, EMBASSY WAS ADVISED OF ONE CASE WHERE GOS ATTEMPTED TO FORCE TWO CAMBODIAN STUDENTS TO RETURN TO PHNOM PENH. WE UNDERSTAND THEY EVENTUALLY LEFT SINGAPORE FOR ANOTHER DESTINATION.

(B) VIETNAMESE. SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO VIETNAMESE IS VERY CONFUSING. ACTING PERMSEC FOR HOME AFFAIRS LUM CHOONG WAH HAS ASSURED VIETNAMESE CHARGE DIEN THAT NO NEW IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN ISSUED. HOWEVER, WE HAVE RECEIVED MANY REPORTS THAT VIETNAMESE TRAVELERS ARRIVING IN SINGAPORE ARE BEING HELD UP FOR HOURS AT THE AIRPORT WHILE IMMIGRATION INSPECTORS SCRUTINIZE THEIR DOCUMENTS AND SEEK INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIGHER AUTHORITY. GOS WILL NORMALLY NOT ACCEPT ANY REFUGEES ARRIVING WITHOUT DOCUMENTATION. ONLY SIGNIFICANT EXCEPTION HAS BEEN 56 REFUGEES WHO ARRIVED IN THE VNAF C-130. PRESENTED WITH THIS PUBLICIZED "FAIT ACCOMPLI", GOS HAS DECIDED NOT TO REPATRIATE THEM FORCIBLY, BUT IS EQUALLY DETERMINED TO SHED RESPONSIBILITY

FOR THEM AND TO AVOID ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY OTHERS. (REF E).

ACCORDING TO DIEN VIETNAMESE HOLDING PASSPORTS CONTAINING VISAS FOR OTHER COUNTRIES IN ADDITION TO SINGAPORE ARE BEING KEPT IN THE TRANSIT LOUNGE UNTIL THEIR TRAVEL TO ANOTHER COUNTRY CAN BE ARRANGED. DIEN STATED THAT SOME VIETNAMESE HOLDING PASSPORTS VALIDATED FOR TRAVEL TO SINGAPORE ONLY AND/OR CONTAINING ONLY A VISA FOR SINGAPORE ARE BEING REFUSED ENTRY AND ARE BEING SENT BACK TO THE PORT OF ORIGIN. SOME EXCEPTION IS BEING MADE FOR RETURNING VIETNAMESE RESIDENTS IN CONFIDENTIAL

SINGAPORE AND FOR THOSE WHO ARE COMING TO JOIN THEIR HUSBANDS WORKING IN SINGAPORE (USUALLY AMERICAN CITIZENS). DIEN STATED THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 120 VIETNAMESE RESIDENTS IN SINGAPORE AND THAT MOST OF THEM ARE WIVES OF AMERICAN CITIZENS. (EMBASSY BELIEVES THIS ESTIMATE IS QUITE LOW AND THAT THERE MAY BE SEVERAL HUNDRED.)

2. MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEM CONFRONTING EMBASSY CONCERNS THE

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VIETNAMESE WIVES AND CHILDREN OF AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO ARE EITHER RETURNING TO SINGAPORE TO JOIN THEIR FAMILIES OR ARE TRYING TO ENTER SINGAPORE FOR A TEMPORARY PERIOD SO THAT THEY CAN APPLY FOR AN IMMIGRANT VISA TO THE UNITED STATES. UNFORTUNATELY, THE GOS IS ONLY PERMITTING PERSONS IN THIS CATEGORY TO STAY FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS.

3. EMBASSY APPROACHED MFA APRIL 14 TO REQUEST MINISTRY TO INTERCEDE WITH MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS TO ALLOW VIETNAMESE WIVES AND CHILDREN OF AMERICAN CITIZENS A STAY OF TWO WEEKS WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE PROCESSING OF THEIR IMMIGRANT VISA APPLICATIONS. HOME AFFAIRS IS VERY RELUCTANT TO AGREE TO A 2-WEEK STAY UNLESS THE EMBASSY CAN ASSURE THE GOS THAT A VISA TO THE UNITED STATES WILL BE GRANTED AND THAT THE EMBASSY WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL EXPENSES INCURRED BY PEOPLE IN THIS CATEGORY. THE EMBASSY HAS INFORMALLY ADVISED MFA THAT WIVES AND CHILDREN OF AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE NORMALLY ELIGIBLE FOR IMMIGRANT VISAS, BUT THAT THE EMBASSY CAN NOT GUARANTEE THAT THERE WILL BE NO REJECTIONS. EMBASSY HAS PROMISED IN ANY CASES WHERE IMMIGRANT VISAS ARE REFUSED TO TRY TO ENLIST THE ASSISTANCE OF THE UNHCR TO HELP RESETTLE SUCH PERSONS IN THIRD COUNTRIES. SINCE MOST WIVES AND CHILDREN OF AMERICAN CITIZENS HAVE AMERICAN HUSBANDS WORKING IN SINGAPORE WE CAN ASSUME THAT THE HUSBANDS OR THEIR COMPANIES WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR EXPENSES. HOWEVER, THE GOS WILL PROBABLY INSIST THAT THE EMBASSY AGREE TO BE ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR EXPENSES BEFORE IT WILL AGREE TO GRANT THEM A 2-WEEK TEMPORARY RESIDENCE IN SINGAPORE.

4. COMMENT. GOS POSITION AND ATTITUDE OUTLINED ABOVE MAY SEEM EXCESSIVELY RIGID, BUT IT IS RELATED TO CLASSIC GOS FEAR OF BEING INUNDATED BY REFUGEES (CHINESE) FROM MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA IN THE EVENT OF FUTURE COMMUNAL CONFLICT IN THOSE COUNTRIES. TO AVOID CREATING A PRECEDENT GOS APPEARS TO BE QUITE CONFIDENTIAL

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PREPARED TO BE VERY HARD-NOSED WITH RESPECT TO REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA. GOS PROBABLY ALSO WISHES AVOID ESTABLISHMENT OF SIGNIFICANT GROUPS OF CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO COULD BECOME A POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT TO SINGAPORE.

5. ACTION REQUESTED. REQUEST DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZE GUARANTEE PAYMENT OF ALL EXPENSES OF VIETNAMESE WIVES AND CHILDREN OF AMERICAN NATIONALS SO THAT GOS WILL PERMIT THEM TO ENTER SINGAPORE FOR SUFFICIENT TIME TO PROCESS THEIR CASES. EMBASSY WILL, OF COURSE OBTAIN IN THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF CASES ASSURANCES FROM HUSBANDS OR RELEVANT COMPANIES THAT THEIR EXPENSES WILL BE PAID. IF DEPARTMENT COULD ALSO GRANT EMBASSY BLANKET AUTHORITY EITHER TO ISSUE IMMIGRANT VISAS (OR EVEN NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS TO BE REGULARIZED LATER) TO WIVES AND CHILDREN OF AMERICAN CITIZENS, PROBLEM WOULD BE LARGELY SOLVED.

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